



*From “Wetland Program Development Grants (WPDGs) Case Studies”
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The Mid-Atlantic Wetland Work Group (MAWWG): *States creating a forum to advance wetland protection through shared resources, expertise, technical tools and program development strategies*

Introduction

Several states have joined together to form the Mid-Atlantic Wetland Workgroup (MAWWG), a forum to facilitate the development and implementation of wetland monitoring strategies that meet the needs of the mid-Atlantic states (i.e., wetland monitoring programs to be implemented at the state level). The workgroup is administered by staff from the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Wetland Center (CWC) and serves as a forum (run by the states, for the states) for sharing information concerning a wide range of wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring issues among the nine member states (DE, MD, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, VA, WV). Additionally, a recent meeting with the New England Biological Assessment Work Group added the six states of EPA Region I to the dialogue. This information forum has led to the sharing and trading of successful approaches and techniques and, equally important, the identification of less productive efforts with limited utility.

WPDG Activity

MAWWG was formed through a WPDG issued to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) in FY2002. The MAWWG member states designated four objectives to advance wetlands protection with the long-term goal of the full incorporation of wetlands into traditional water quality monitoring programs (e.g., Clean Water Act Sections 305(b), 303(d), 319 and 106). These objectives have included the regionalization of existing monitoring and assessment tools for wetlands (i.e. HGM classification, functional assessment and biological assessment), the provision of training for regulatory personnel in monitoring and assessment methods, and the development of the MAWWG website to provide information on monitoring and assessment tools.

To date, four states (PA, VA, DE, OH) in MAWWG have tools that are field tested and currently used at the field level. Each of these tools was developed independent of MAWWG, however, each state utilized WPDGs to develop and test their tools. Through their interaction and involvement in MAWWG, the states have been able to share tools that cross ecoregions. States that do not have tools developed and/or program strategies look toward those states in MAWWG that have developed these instruments for wetland monitoring at the state level. Additionally, through the coordination and access provided by MAWWG meetings, several states (Delaware, Virginia and Maryland) were recently awarded a joint WPDG to establish monitoring protocols for tidal wetlands in the Delmarva Peninsula. By pooling resources, three states with similar ecoregions will share in the development of tidal wetland monitoring methods.

MAWWG provides relevant training to members regarding tool development and implementation of wetland monitoring programs. Offering economies of scale, the EPA Office of Research and Development Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program uses the MAWWG forum to provide practical training to state wetland practitioners and guide the development, implementation, analysis and reporting of a wetland monitoring program. In the future, MAWWG will use monitoring and assessment tools to improve restoration and mitigation. A meeting in Fall 2005 began to explore options on creating appropriate tools for restoration and mitigation sites.

From the perspective of its member states, MAWWG provides:

- Direct access to EPA expertise, through travel to MAWWG meetings;
- Opportunities to form ongoing relationships with EPA technical personnel for continued guidance (e.g., EPA-EMAP Aquatic Survey Design Team and EPA-ORD personnel);
- A forum for neighboring states in the Mid-Atlantic who are in the planning stages of wetland monitoring to share information, brainstorm ideas, and exchange strategies;
- An efficient avenue for continued communication between states and EPA Regional Offices; and
- A means for coordination between states of reference sites and regional field efforts.

The benefits to the collective state programs with regard to new information, realized economies of scale and avoidance of costly mistakes is difficult to quantify but is likely substantial in the amount of time, money and effort saved.

Current Work and Future Plans

MAWWG satisfies several federal initiatives including the regionalization of the Biological Assessment of Wetlands Workgroup national effort, blending biological assessments into regulatory programs, and the integration of existing monitoring and reporting units (e.g., 303d and 305b). MAWWG also provides a forum for the exchange of bioassessment tools, promotes the inclusion of wetlands into assessment programs for other waters, and serves as an information point for advisory groups (e.g., Pennsylvania's Wetlands Advisory Committee). MAWWG will continue making progress within the goals outlined above and facilitate the coordination of resources and ideas among its members and beyond.

Please visit the Mid-Atlantic Wetland Work Group (MAWWG) website (<http://www.mawwg.psu.edu/>) for more information on how member states are working to protect wetland resources.

Success Story Contributors: Shelby Reisinger (PA DEP) and Regina Poeske (EPA)